CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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B221 Glaucous-winged Gull Larus glaucescens
Family: Laridae Order: Charadriiformes Class: Aves

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common visitor to California from October until early May. Can be abundant in favorable habitats in mid-winter (Grinnell and Miller 1944). Occurs in large numbers south to San Francisco Bay, with fewer at Monterey Bay. In southern California, increasingly scarce and localized coastally down to the San Diego region (Devillers et al. 1971). Feeds at garbage dumps, beaches and rock outcrops, in bays, harbors, and estuaries; sometimes forages at marine mammal colonies (Devillers et al. 1971). Rare inland, but occasionally frequents wet fields and dump sites in the Central Valley (Cogswell 1977). In southern California, a rare visitor to inland valleys and the Salton Sea (Devillers et al. 1971, Garrett and Dunn 1981). In migration, has been recorded hundreds of miles offshore in pelagic waters where it occasionally associates with herring gull (Sanger 1973). A few nonbreeders may remain in California through the summer (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: This omnivore feeds primarily at dump sites, docks, and shorelines near coastal cities where abundant food is available (Terres 1980). It also forages on outer coasts for ship offal and marine invertebrates such as barnacles, mollusks, and sea urchins, which are broken open by dropping from the air. In littoral and pelagic waters, it takes carrion and fish and occasionally steals food from other birds (Terres 1980). In Alaska, it kills salmon spawning in inland streams (Mossman 1958), and eats waste portions of slaughtered seals (Bent 1921).

Cover: Roosts and preens with other gulls on sandy beaches, mudflats, intertidal rocks, wharves, and coastal buildings (Dawson 1923, Cogswell 1977).

Reproduction: Breeds coastally from western Alaska south sparingly to Oregon (Scott 1971). Usually nests in large colonies on offshore islands with gulls and other seabirds, but scattered pairs occasionally nest alone (Bent 1921, Harrison 1978). Typically nests on rock ledges (Harrison 1978), or on sand or soil substrates with tall grasses (Hoffman et al. 1978). Nest constructed from dried straw, kelp, other seaweeds, and sometimes fishbones or feathers (Bent 1921, Terres 1980).

Water: Commutes daily to inland lakes to drink and bathe in fresh water (Cogswell 1977).

Pattern: Frequents open shores, littoral and pelagic waters, sandy beaches, and rocky coasts. Most common coastally in sheltered estuaries and bays, but also visits wet fields and dumps inland (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Cogswell 1977).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. As most gulls, this species forages actively in the morning hours, then gathers at roost sites in the afternoon (Cogswell 1977).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Migrates south from northern breeding grounds to California by October. Numbers increase through winter (Grinnell and Miller 1944). Most depart the state by April or May, but a few stragglers may remain through summer (Cogswell 1977).

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: In British Columbia, Hunt and Hunt (1976) reported average territory size of 14.3 m^2 (154 ft^2) one year, and 14.8 m^2 (160 ft^2) the next.

Reproduction: Nesting begins in late May or early June, and usually is colonial. Clutch averages 3 eggs; range 2-4. Pair is single-brooded; incubation lasts al 26 days. Nestlings are semi-precocial (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Intergrades extensively with western gull along the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia (Scott 1971), and hybrids occur in California (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). In coastal Washington, more than half the nesters were phenotypic intergrades (Hoffman et al. 1978). In British Columia, pecking of trespassing chicks by neighboring adults was the major cause of mortality. Chick growth rates and territory sizes affected chick survival in years of low food availability (Hunt and Hunt 1976). Human observers in experimental portions of San Juan Island colonies significantly decreased chick survival rates (Gillett et al. 1975).

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